Long Live the

Zbeul

generation!

"Vive la génération Zbeul ! A propos des récentes émeutes
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an account of the recent riots in Morocco as seen from a far corner of France

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Sans Nom, December 2025

"Vive la génération Zbeul!"

The term "*zbeuler*" is now quite widespread in France, especially among those who seek to make a break with normality, whether that of the exploitation of labor, the power of the police, the patriarchy, etc… "*Zbeuler*" as a verb means to disrupt and disorder what that the rich and powerful seek to impose upon us all. The linguistic origins of the term derive from the Arabic word "*zbel*," meaning "garbage" or "waste," and, by extension, what must thrown away or eliminated. "*Zbel*" quickly took on a social significance, especially through the popularity of an online meme based on a web series character named "*Bouzebal*." Literally translating to "garbage man," *Bouzebal* is a young lower-class drifter from the banlieues whose sworn enemy is "*Kilimini*" (a phonetic contraction of the French "*qu'il est mignon*," "how cute he is," in the Moroccan Darija dialect), a rich kid symbolizing those privileged youth who had the means to study abroad and can speak formal French. From September 30 to October 1, a riotous wave of "*zbeul*" engulfed more than 30 cities in Morocco, big and small, which largely seems to have been the work of a bunch of "*bouzebals*," as some would say out of contempt for the working class but which for others is a sign of pride. Whether they were indeed *bouzebals* or not, all of the rebels who attacked police stations and burned down banks defied authority with a fiery intensity seldom seen in Morocco in recent years.

These two nights of riots followed in the wake of a series of major protests throughout the country that started with a demonstration held outside of the Hassan II Hospital in Agadir on September 14, protesting the deplorable state of care at the hospital where at least 8

women had died while giving birth that August. One week later, two other protests were organized in Tiznit and Essaouira, two cities near Agadir, during which more than 10 protesters were arrested and later released. Then, the "GenZ212" collective (a reference to so-called "Generation Z" and the national telephone code of Morocco) announced its formation on Discord, branding itself outside of existing political parties and unions, and called for peaceful protests in more than a dozen major cities on Saturday, September 27 to demand reforms in health care and education and to denounce political corruption—"*pour amour de la patrie et du roi*."

Hundreds of people took to the streets in Rabat, Casablanca, Tanger, Tetouan, Marrakesh, Agadir, and Meknes, chanting slogans like "liberté, dignité, justice sociale" and demands for reform. The cops quickly put an end to the protests, kettling protesters and making numerous arrests—70 in Rabat alone—on the grounds that the demos lacked authorization. In most cases, those arrested were released without charges after their identities were checked.

The GenZ212 collective called for more demonstrations to take place the following day, and despite the numerous arrests the night before, protests once again erupted in the major cities but in smaller towns as well, like Safi and Tinghir. Protesters in Casablanca took over a highway, where 24 people were arrested with charges of blocking traffic.

On the night of September 29, hundreds of people again defied the protest ban, risking arrest. The cops dispersed the protests in Casablanca and arrested more than 50 people in Rabat and 60 people in Marrakesh, a city suffering from the tourism industry where determined protesters took to the streets in a spontaneous demo, shouting, "*La peuple veut la fin de la corruption*," the main slogan of

the wider movement, but also chants like "*Vive le peuple*," words which, in a Moroccan society living under the yoke of an all-powerful monarchy, has a subtle but radical ring to it, subverting the usual "*Vive le roi*."

Two Nights of Widespread *Zbeul*

On the night of September 30, the movement spontaneously erupted into riots in more than 20 cities, often on the outskirts of bigger cities but also in smaller, more isolated towns, completely overwhelming the GenZ212 collective's calls for peaceful protests. In Nador, Errachidia, Berkane, Beni Mellal, Tiznit, Kenitra, Khenifra, Guelmin, Rabat, Meknes, Ouarzazate, Casablanca, Fez, Agadir, Temara, and Skhirat, spontaneous demos inundated the streets and overpowered the riot cops who were everywhere bombarded with well-deserved stones.

Elsewhere, the revolt become even more difficult for the authorities, who were then confronting hundreds of riots, to control. In Inezgane, an Agadir suburb, three police cars were smashed up, one insurance agency and three banks were raided, and a Marjane chain grocery shop and several jewelry stores were looted. In Ait Amira, a smaller, 50,000 person town south of Agadir, the Royal Gendarmerie lost 12 of their police cars, some of which were completely burned, and several banks were smashed up in a display of collective jubilation.

In Oujda, a city on the other side of Morocco, the cops were targeted with a profusion of stones, but those bastards, attempting to regain control, drove into the crowd with their riot van, seriously injuring at least one person who ended up losing a leg. In total, the

authorities announced that 142 police cars were destroyed on the night of September 20 alone.

On the night of October 1, though the Ministry of the Interior did end up authorizing the sit-in called for by the GenZ212 collective, rioters attacked authority and capital where they found it, often far from the "official" protest locations. The revolt expanded to more cities and erupted with a fiercer intensity than the night before.

In Salé, an impoverished city near the capital Rabat, after clashes with the cops, two Sûreté Nationale cars were burned to the ground, a bank was set on fire in the Al Amal neighborhood, while several other banks and a currency exchange shop lost all their windows and a Carrefour chain supermarket was ransacked.

In Marrakesh, while a march was gathering in the streets downtown, the police completely lost control of the Sidi Youssef Ben Ali neighborhood on the opposite side of the city, well-known for having been the hotbed of insurrection against the French colonial authorities in the 50's. After around 200 people, mainly youth, bombarded the cops posted at the neighborhood entrance with bricks and glass bottles, the local police station was burned to the ground, and a bank as well as two currency exchange shops were looted. It would end up taking the cops all night to regain control of the neighborhood.

In Tamansourt, a smaller town a few miles north of Marrakesh, the police station was also burned to the ground. Further down the Atlantic coast in El Jadida, a spontaneous demo escalated the *zbeul* to the extreme, burning down several cop cars. In Taroudant, protestors attacked the police station and set fire to the entrance. In Kalaat M'Gouna, a smaller, isolated town south of the Atlas Mountains, unrest overwhelmed the streets with looting and fires.

Finally, in Lqliâa, a southern suburb of Agadir, a Royal Gendarmerie precinct was attacked by dozens of people who tore down the entrance gates, stole a police truck, burned down many other police cars, and set the building on fire in multiple places. The cops, taking refuge inside, fired live rounds into the crowd, murdering three people and leaving several others seriously wounded. The Minister of the Interior announced that three officers were also injured in the attack.

"The Courts Are Fully Authorized to Lock Them All Up"

On October 2, a communiqué signed in the name of the GenZ212 collective rejected "all forms of violence or vandalism," declaring, after a Discord vote with more than 15,000 participants, a curfew on protests that would now be limited from 5 to 8 PM and that the meeting locations would also be moved to the main city squares, far from the working class neighborhoods, "in order to avoid any serious incidents with the police." A campaign to "clean up" the streets was also organized with accompanying photos for the press. After this call for peace, the collective further rejected solidarity with the rioters in a letter addressed to the King. The text included eight demands, foremost among which was the resignation of Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch from government.

Another demand, further down the list, called for anyone arrested during "peaceful" protests be released from jail and their charges

dropped, save for "those whose involvement in sabotage or attacking the police has been proven."

On the night of October 2, many people in the Sidi Youssef Ben Ali neighborhood in Marrakesh didn't want to back down despite the repression. Yet again, the cops were bombarded with stones, a bank was looted, and stores were smashed up. It's conceivable that elsewhere, too, there were active participants in the riots who didn't want to yield or retreat. However, it seems that after October 3 normality had prevailed, even if the GenZ212 collective continued to call for demonstrations in the major cities, which only assembled a few dozen protesters in each city. More than 2,400 of the thousands more arrested were charged and prosecuted. Some have already been sentenced with harsh prison terms, and some are still waiting for trail, whether in jail or out after paying a bail generally amounting between 2,000 to 5,000 dirhams (300 to 600 dollars).

Here are some numbers published in the media that give an insight to the ongoing judicial carnage:

— In Agadir on October 14, 17 people were sentenced to prison for crimes committed in Air Amira on the night of October 1. Notably, they were charged with "destruction of public and private property," "conspiracy to commit theft," "arson," and "violence against the police." Three of them were sentenced to 15 years in prison, one to 12 years, nine to 10 years, one to 5 years, one to 4 years, and two to 3 years.

— In Ouarzazate, 6 people from Kalaat M'Gouna were charged with "arson," "destruction of public and private property," "blocking traffic," and "violence against the police." Three of them were sentenced to 4 years in prison, two others to 2 years, and the last to 1 year.

— In Oujda, 16 people were charged with "violence against the police" and "participation in unlawful, armed nighttime assemblies." 17 others were charged with "criminal conspiracy," "armed riot," "organizing an unlawful demonstration," "possession of bladed weapons," "destruction of public and private property," and "assault on a police officer." In late October, eight of them were sentenced to prison for between 15 and 18 months, while seven others were released on probation.

— In Agadir and Casablanca, two people were sentenced to 4 and 5 years in prison for "incitement to commit crimes on social media."

— In Marrakesh, 26 people were charged in 6 different legal cases with "violence against the police," "participation in an armed assembly," "online criminal incitation," "destruction of public and private property," and "possession of bladed weapons."

— In Kenitra, 17 people, 9 of them minors, were charged with "looting," "destruction of public and private property," and "arson."

— In Rabat, several people were charged with "armed assembly" and "contempt of the crown."

A Seemingly Invincible King

On October 8, around 60 intellectuals, artists, and human rights activists also published a letter to the King, demanding he "address the deep, structural causes of social unrest." GenZ212 activists expected a "clear sign" from the monarchy during a speech to parliament planned for October 10. The collective even decided to announce, the day before the speech, the "suspension of all protests," "out of respect for His Majesty the King Mohamed VI, may God protect and glorify his

name." In Morocco, although there's an elected Parliament and a Prime Minister appointed by the party that wins the legislative elections, the King, surrounded by his royal cabinet, remains the sole leader. He presides over the Council of Ministers, and, at any moment, he can dismiss Ministers, fire the Prime Minister, dissolve Parliament, suspend the constitution, call for new elections, or govern by royal decree ("*Dahir*"). In addition to his political status, he's also the "*Amir al-Mu'minin*," the religious leader of a country where Islam is the state religion. To reinforce his status, the Alawi dynasty, to which the royal family belongs, presents him as no less than the descendent of the prophet Mohammad himself. Also, he holds an allegiance ceremony every year during which hundreds of state functionaries, ministers, regime dignitaries, deputies, local electeds, high ranking officials from the army, the police, and intelligence services, bow before "His Majesty" seated atop a throne and sheltered from the sun by an umbrella, all direct to television.

All throughout the country, on the other hand, the authority of the King and more broadly that of the "*Makhzen*," a widely used term in Morocco to refer to the state, is safeguarded by means of control over the population depending both on a traditional police and administrative apparatus and more or less unofficial counter-intelligence system. The slightest criticism of the King is almost non-existent, since this system effectively spreads fear of authority. At the neighborhood level, for example, semi-official agents of the state called "*moqaddems*" encourage people to inform on each other regarding any subversive behavior, whether political but also moral (in a country where queer relationships and sex outside of marriage are crimes that punishable by prison).

Past Struggles Remain in Memory

In the 26 years since Mohammed VI succeeded the throne after the death of his father Hassan II, the authorities have been confronted with several revolts, while repression has proven to be just as ferocious. The revolt that has been most resurgent in the memories of the rebels today is certainly the Hirak Rif revolt that began in October 2016. After the death of a fishmonger who was crushed to death in a garbage truck after he attempted to recover his merchandise confiscated by the Makhzen, tens of thousands of people descended into the streets of Al Hoceima, the capital of Rif, in memory of Mouhcine Fikri and to protest against their living conditions. After eight months of unyielding protests and demonstrations, more and more blatant challenges to the Makhzen's authority, and the public interruption of an imam's prayers calling for an end to the movement, the authorities arrested hundreds of people. In response, a huge march demanding their release was held on July 20, 2017, during which a protestor was wounded in the head after a tear gas grenade explosion during clashes with the police. He fell into a coma and died a few weeks later. Among those arrested, around 500 were sentenced to prison, four of whom faced 20 years for "conspiracy to undermine state security." Recently, Nasser Zefzafi, a widely publicized prisoner from the Hirak Rif revolt, published a letter of support to the GenZ212 movement from prison. Chants often resound during the protests calling for the release of political prisoners from previous revolts.

The memories of the current rebels are also obviously marked by the February 20 movement in 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring, with protests openly criticizing the regime for several months, police

stations attacked in many ares, but also a death toll of nine, three of whom were murdered by the cops. Partly co-opted by political parties, including Islamist ones, it would lead to a constitutional reform and new legislative elections. In the last few years, other revolts have been symptomatic of the poverty levels experienced by most of the country. In late 2018, "Thirst Protests" broke out in Zagora against the cost of water, and, in early 2019, inhabitants of the mining city Jerada took to the streets for several months after the deaths of two men who, like many others, earned their livings illegally re-selling coal excavated from abandoned shafts of the shut-down mine.

Many people in Morocco have to these kinds of informal jobs in order to live, all while pledging allegiance to a king who, in addition to his political and religious status, controls the largest financial conglomerate in the country, Al Mada, comprising multiple subsidiaries in banking, logistics, real estate, telecommunications, energy, and, historically, mining. The royal family, owners of Managem Group, who possess a 6 billion dollar fortune, operate over a dozen gold and silver mines in the poorest regions of the country, worsening living conditions by privatizing water holdings and rampant pollution and environmental contamination. The Imider silver mine, south of the Atlas Mountains, is well known for the tenacious resistance from local inhabitants since the 80's. In 2011, rebels even shut off the water supply to the mine while occupying the site around the mine in a long-standing protest camp.

The World Cup, Africa Cup of Nations, High-Speed Rail… Morocco's Mega-Projects

In the protests in early October, outrage was often directed at the exorbitant construction costs to build the soccer stadium that will host the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) in 2026 and the World Cup in 2030. In Tangier and Casablanca, at the start of the protest movement, billboards installed in the streets counting down to the start of the CAN were even hacked to instead display insults against the cops and demands for health and education. During the demonstrations, chants and slogans criticized the billion dollar mega-projects, comparing them to the sorry state of hospitals where patients must sometimes bring their own bedsheets and medical supplies. To top it all off, the brand new stadium in Rabat also features a state-of-the-art health clinic for athletes… With great fanfare, the authorities announced that the stadium to be constructed by 2030 would be the biggest in the world, with 115,000 capacity, costing 5 billion dirhams (over 1 billion dollars). With the approaching start of the competitions, the Makhzen also launched an eviction campaign, targeting poor people in the central neighborhoods of major cities. Hundreds of houses in Casablanca have been demolished since 2024 and their occupants relocated to outlying areas in order to build a royal avenue to the Hassan II Mosque in their place.

If the construction sites for the soccer tournaments are manifesting class tensions, the discrepancy between the huge capitalist

projects with their massive investments and local standards of life is obvious everywhere. These mega projects are often guided by the interests of foreign investors, primarily Emirati, Chinese, and French. Perhaps one day the storm that ravaged banks and police stations during the fiery nights of September 30 and October 1 will begin to target the infrastructure of neo-colonial capitalism. Perhaps one day soon, rage will strike the new 200 mile high-speed rail line from Tangier to Casablanca commissioned in 2010 for 3 billion euros by the French Alstom multinational which made a 1 billion dollar fortune selling new train lines to Morocco in 2024. Perhaps one day this storm will expand further to the south, where all the predatory interests of French capitalist specialists in the so-called "energy transition" are conglomerating.

Green Hydrogen & Neo-Colonialism in Western Sahara

The Moroccan state since 1975 has occupied more than 80% of Western Sahara, a territory covering more than 100,000 square miles, even though, until recently, the UN still considered it to be a "non-self-governing territory." An armed Sahrawi organization, the Polisario Front (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro), controls the remaining 20%, still fighting for independence. In October 2025, the UN Security Council recognized a plan seeking to grant autonomy to this region under Moroccan sovereignty, validating a process of colonization begun years before in

wars and massacres and continued ever since through occupation, repression, and theft.

Tensions revived in the area occupied by the Moroccan authorities in 2010 after more than 15,000 Sahrawi people launched a protest camp in Gdeim Izik on the outskirts of Laayoune to protest against their living conditions. The eviction of the camps by the cops left at least a dozen dead, including several police officers. In 2020 the armed conflict between the Moroccan army and the Polisario Front resumed after a 20 year cease-fire. Tensions today are still palpable but resistance isn't manifest enough to slow down the new "green" gold rush.

For, while Western Sahara has historically been exploited for its fishing resources and its vast phosphate deposits, used in manufacturing agricultural fertilizers, today it's the region's exposure to wind and sunlight that's attracting investors. Such climate conditions make it a very profitable zone for the production of "green" energy and "carbon-free" fuel, such as "green hydrogen," convertible into the ammonia necessary for producing nitrogen-based fertilizers. In March 2024, the Crown launched its "Morocco Offer," an invitation for foreign exploitation of 2.5 million identified acres of land, expected to meet 4% of the global demand for fertilizers by 2030.

Though there was a crisis in France and Morocco's diplomatic relations in 2021 after Moroccan secret service agents were accused of spying on, among others, Macron via his personal cell phone with the aid of Israeli Pegasus software, they were quickly restored after France announced that it would support Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara in July 2024. Three months later, a visit of the French President

was organized with huge fanfare accompanied by nine representatives of energy conglomerates with huge contracts at stake.

Thus, Engie would end up investing 17 billion dollars in partnership with the OCP Group, the largest Moroccan mining company, in six projects linked to renewable energy, green ammonia, and "sustainable desalination." Next to the small town of Chbika, Total would build and operate a green ammonia production center for export to the European market. In Dakhla, MGH Energy would sign a contract to build an e-fuels factory, while HDF Energy would plan to build a mega factory there capable of producing 200,000 tons of green hydrogen per year. Furthermore, all these vultures are backed by the French Development Agency (AFD), in line with its neo-colonial mission to support France's interests in the capitalist development of its former colonies and the rest of the so-called Global South.

There's enough in all these projects combined to decimate thousands of acres of desert, just to keep the ecologically catastrophic agro-industry running smooth all throughout the world. In Western Sahara, just like everywhere else, the infamous "energy transition" is nothing more than the neo-colonial conquest and capitalist exploitation of the last remaining resources on a devastated planet.

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There's no limit to the insatiable greed of the exploiters, and, as long as they are able to continue their ruinous work, the poor will always be subjected to the consequences. In Morocco, In Morocco, the Makhzen's propaganda, spread through its baltajia (hired pro-monarchy goons), obscures what's actually at stake by continuing to stoke Moroccan nationalism—"Allah, la nation, le roi"—and continuing to displace anger upon the external enemy, whether Algerian or Sahrawi. But, like the recent revolt demonstrates, there are many people who are well aware of who is responsible for their misery, where they are, and how they can be attacked.

Solidarity with the rebels in Morocco,
Madagascar, Nepal, Indonesia, Peru, &
everywhere else in the world!

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